ED 319 085 CS 507 161

AUTHOR Curtis, Dan B.; Hansen, Tricia L.
TITLE Humor in the Workplace: A Communication Tool. An Annotated Bibliography.
INSTITUTION Speech Communication Association, Annandale, Va.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 5p.
AVAILABLE FROM Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Rd., Building E, Annandale, VA 22003 (free).
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; Communication Research; Communication Skills; Groups; *Humor; Intergroup Relations; *Interpersonal Communication; *Organizational Climate; Organizational Communication; Rapport; Social Behavior; Social Cognition
IDENTIFIERS Management Practices; Message Transmission; Small Group Communication

ABSTRACT

The 47 references, dating mostly from 1976 to 1990, in this annotated bibliography provide information about the effect of humor in written and spoken messages and its role in interpersonal relationships, especially within the context of small groups and organizational environments. The materials in the bibliography are cited according to academic sources, popular and trade sources, and books. (KEH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED319085

HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE: A COMMUNICATION TOOL

An Annotated Bibliography

by

Dan B. Curtis, Ph. D., Central Missouri State University
Tricia L. Hansen, M.A., Kearney State College

April 1990

Distributed by the Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Rd., Bldg. E, Annandale, VA 22003. This bibliography may be reproduced for free distribution without permission of the Speech Communication Association.

Academic Sources

Bryant, J., Brown, D., Silberberg, A.R. and Elliott, S.M. (1981, Fall). Effects of humorous illustrations in college textbooks. Human Communication Research, 8, 43-57. The study examines the effect of humor within educational textbooks. Results of the study indicate that humorous pictorial illustrations enchance the appeal of texts, yet do not alter learning motivation nor memory retention.

Cantor, J. (1981, Winter). Modifying the children's eating habits through television advertisements: Effects of humorous appeals in a field setting. Journal of Broadcasting, 25, 37-47. The study examines the persuasiveness of humorous vs. nonhumorous televised messages. Results suggest that in the absence of an immediate counter-advertisement, a serious ad for good nutrition is more effective than a humorous one.

Cantor, J. and Venus, P. (1980, Winter). The effect of humor on recall of radio advertisement. Journal of Broadcasting, 24, 13-22. The effects of humor use in the memorability and persuasiveness of radio advertisement were tested. Humor was found to call attention to advertisement while also promoting poor recall of the ads.

Chang, M-J and Gruner, C.R. (1981, Summer). Audience reaction to self-disparaging humor. The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 46, 419-426. The use and effects of self-disparaging humor while speaking are addressed. Results of the study indicate that speakers perceived as having both high status and ethos can use self-disparaging humor to appear witty and entertaining, while not impairing their credibility.

Cullather, J.L. (1983, March-April). Has the laughter died? Musings on "The New Yorker's" business ethics cartoons. Business Horizons, 30-33. The author traces the transitions of cartoons featured in "The New Yorker" as they have changed over time and paralleled our business environment.

Duncan, W.J. (1984, November). Perceived humor and social network patterns in a sample of task-oriented groups: A reexamination of prior research. Human Relations, 37, 895-907. This study examined relationships between humor networks and interpersonal relationships within task-oriented groups. The network of joking behaviors within work groups was found to be a part of the larger social context of groups.

Duncan, W.J. (1982). Humor in management: Prospects for administrative practice and research. Academy of Management Review, 7, 136-142. The author reviews existing research on humor appreciation, group cohesiveness, power and status, and potential links between "group dynamic variables and human performance. A list of guidelines for management in matching humor with the situation is given, and some priorities are suggested for research."

Duncan, W.J. (1985, November). The superiority theory of humor at work: Joking relationships as indicators of formal and informal status patterns in small, task-oriented groups. Small Group Behavior, 16, 556-564. Duncan discusses how humor may relate to status patterns in diverse task-oriented groups. His findings indicate that professional norms within any certain group can decidedly alter joking patterns.

CS507161

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. WORK

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Duncan, W.J. and Feisal, J.P. (1989, Spring). No laughing matter: Patterns of humor in the workplace. Organizational Dynamics, 17, 18-30. Joking is addressed as serious business from a management standpoint. The authors' study shows that managers who pay attention to the employees' joking relationships can learn much about what is really happening in the workplace and how joking may affect performance.

Gorham, J. and Christophel, D.M. (1990, January). The relationship of teachers' use of humor in the classroom to immediacy and student learning. Communication Education, 39,46-62. Results of this study suggest that teachers' use of humor in the classroom is related to learning and that the most desirable learning outcomes are associated with the quality as much as the quantity of humor used in conjunction with other immediacy behaviors.

IABC Communication World. (1988, April). The world's most humorous business illustrator, 23-26. Represented are artists who have illustrated for major business publications and are found exceptional for their ability to make persons laugh (smile). The artists have been found to provoke laughter through use of irony, satire, parody, whimsy, surprise, and a sense of the sublime and absurd.

Iapoce, M. (1988, April). Not just for laughs. IABC Communication World, 28-31. Iapoce provides an outline for how humor can be a cost-effective means of influencing people. Humor functions to (1) put people at ease, (2) disarm hostile audiences, (3) ease approaches to sensitive subjects, (4) form connections with audiences, (5) make the understanding of facts and figures easier, and (6) make a function fun.

Journal of Communication. (1976, Summer). Laughing matter? A symposium of studies on humor as communication, 26, 102-204. Humor is addressed as the communication tool of social function. The studies included indicate that humor "can help manage conflict, integrate novelty, and cope with--or administer--abuse and hurt."

Leap, T.L. and Smeltzer, L.R. (1984, November/December). Racial remarks in the workplace: Humor or harassment? Harvard Business Review, 62, 74-75 & 78. Leap and Smeltzer examine the controversy surrounding the question of what constitutes humor as opposed to harassment. He concludes that written company policy can go far in preventing harassment and, can keep humor in the right perspective so as to be a healthy environmental factor.

Linstead, S. (1985, November). Jokers wild: The importance of humor in the maintenance of organizational culture. Sociological Review, 33, 741-767. The author argues that humor is manifest within organizations in one of two major "joke forms": standardized/canned or situational/spontaneous. In his analysis he demonstrates that humor is complex and even contradictory in its relationship to organizational cultures, but due to the many functions it performs, it is an essential part of organizational life. The success of humor as a functional device, Linstead argues, is dependent upon its relation to the cultural and/or symbolic environment of the organization.

Malone, P.B., III. (1980). Humor: A double-edged tool for today's managers. Academy of Management Review, 5, 357-360. Malone examines the new trend in contemporary management initiatives such as participative management, open communication, etc. In light of the new interests in organizational development, the authors suggest the potential in using humor to facilitate contemporary initiatives, thereby contributing to management's ability to get things done.

Mendleson, J., Golen, S. and Adams. P. (1986, September/October). Humor in managerial communication. Industrial Management and Data Systems, 5-8. Humor is defined and addressed as both a relaxer and social adhesive. Its roles in the manager's "self-talk," in oral presentation, persuasion, and perception are discussed.

Munn, W.C. and Gruner, C.R. (1981, Summer). "Sick" jokes, speaker sex, and informative speech. The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 46, 411-418. Results of this study found that the inclusion of "sick" jokes in a speech generally resulted in negative evaluation from the audience.

Newman, J. (1989, September). A corporate good humor man. Business Month, 134, 13-14. Humor is presented as a valuable business communication tool, but only when used carefully and appropriately.

O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. and Adams, K. (1983, Spring). Heheh in conversation: Some coordinating accomplishments of laughter. The Western Journal of Speech, 47, 175-191. Laughter is seen to coordinate human interaction as (1) a turn-taking cue, (2) an instruction to hear, (3) a display of hearership, (4) a resource in affiliation, and (5) an invitation to elaborate.

Palmer, L. (1988, April). Better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick. IABC Communication World, 18-19. Humor is addressed as an effective tool, especially for successfully crossing cultural boundaries.

Pearson, J.C., Miller, G.R. and Senter, M-M. (1983, Winter). Sexism and sexual humor: A research note. Central States Speech Communication Journal, 34, 257-259. The sexual bias of jokes in the workplace is examined. Results of the study indicated a selection preference of both males and females to tell jokes whose content discriminated against males.

Pilgrim, R. (1988, April). Humor is best kept at home. IABC Communication World, 20-21. Pilgrim satirizes the beneficial uses of humor, suggesting it an unnatural state for humanity, as he gives grounds for a lack of humor being successful.

Stat, J. (1988, April) John Cleese teaches through laughter. IABC Communication World, 34-35. Featured are the tips of John Cleese (alum of the Monty Python and Faulty Towers troupe and founder of Video Arts, Chicago) on how to best use humor effectively in facilitating important elements of communication.

Stocking, S.H., Sapolsky, B.S. and Zillman, D. (1977, Fall). Sex discrimination in prime time humor. Journal of Broadcasting, 21, 447-457. The study seeks to establish whether or not females are the butt of comedy more frequently than males in prime-time programming. Results suggest that they are not.

Sykes, A.J.M. (1966). Joking rules in an industrial setting. American Anthropologist, 68, 188-193. Sykes describes a system of joking relationships he found to exist between members of a male and female staff of a large printing business. He concluded that joking relationships are indicative of social relationships.

Taylor, P.M. (1974, Summer). An experimental study of humor and ethos. Ihe Southern States Speech Communication Journal, 39, 359-366. The suggestion that use of humor increases a speaker's ethos is addressed. Results of the study suggest that humor usage may actually decrease speaker ethos.

Thomas, V. (1988, April). Humor to relieve work pressures. IABC Communication World, 27. Humor as a tool of management is discussed. The author gives precedence to the idea that humor is neither good nor bad; it only becomes one or the other through its utilization.

Wagle, J.S. (1985). Using humor in the industrial selling process. Industrial Marketing Manakgement, 221-226. This study suggests that humor "can enhance the sales presentation and favorably influence the overall buyer/seller relationship, provided the salesperson has adequate knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of humor." The authors note that humor should only be an addition to current sales and management skills, rather than their substitute.

Popular and Trade Sources

Dunn, D.D. (Ed.). (1983, September 5). The serious business of using jokes in public speaking. Business Week, 93-94. The author discusses appropriate guidelines for using humor as an effective tool while speaking and/or providing leadership in public situations.

Eisenhart, T. (1989, February). Tickling clients' funny bones. Business Marketing, 74, 41. Eisenhart discusses the recent rise and success of firms specializing in offering "business comedy."

Harper, D. (1987, February). Strictly for salesmen: Laughing all the way to the bank. Industrial Distribution, 76, 52. Harper discusses the ideas of John Doherty, author of The Magic of Thinking Big in Selling, who claims that humor is one of the biggest aids in successful selling.

Hughes, C. (1985, September). On being systematically outrageous. Supervisory Management, 30, 2-5. Hughes presents the theory that one can change employees' negative attitudes and reinforce positive

behaviors and perception through being "systematically outrageous."

Jaffe, C.A. (1990, January). Management by fun. Nation's Business, 58-60. The author provides a review of company-sponsored fun. Highlighted is the potential for humor to enhance employee enthusiasm, loyalty, output and management's effectiveness.

Johnstone, W.R. and Bullock, W. (1987, December). The lighter side. Management World, 16, 27. Humor is presented as integral to developing and sustaining healthy relationships within work groups.

Kichell III, W. (1983, December 12). Office hours: Executives ought to be funnier. Fortune, 205 & 208. Kichell discusses the merits of humor in the workplace. He outlines purposes for its planned use: (1) to defuse tense situations, (2) to create rapport, (3) to underscore power differences, (4) to make messages more agreeable, and (5) to maintain control.

Krohe, J., Jr. (1987, February). Take my boss-please. Across the Board, 31-35. Krohe discusses humor as its presence is felt in any organization. Of special interest is the author's examination of the social and/or organizational connotations and power associated with the use of humor.

Kushner, M. (1988, April). Humor as a mangement tool. IABC Communication World, 32-33. Building the idea of humor as a powerful management tool, Kushner provides five rules for its effectiveness.

Lasden, M. (Ed.). (1985, April 23). Laughter gives you an edge. Computer Decisions, 70-76 & 80+. Humor used wisely and in atmospheres of trust can foster a healthy environment. This is to be valued in the world of management information systems and data processing.

Nations's Business. (1985, November). Getting down to funny business, 73, 44-48. Humor is addressed as a serious business communication tool, important in providing both information and entertainment.

Ralston, J. (1984, February). Women on the job: Jest for success. McCall's, 20. Ralston underscores the role of humor in making disasters less devastating, tension more tolerable, and bad days more bearable.

USA Today, (1987, April). The value of humor, 5-6. The value of humor in the workplace is discussed. Ideas from Peter Desberg, professor of graduate education studies at California State University, are presented.

Wilde, L. (1988, July). Beat stress: Stress humor. Association Management, 130. Wilde encourages the use of humor in the workplace to relieve stress. Three steps in the use process are given: (1) read something funny, (2) laugh at yourself, and (3) develop your humor file.

Witty, S. (1983, August). The laugh-makers: New studies spotlight the growth of the human funny bone. Psychology Today, 17, 22-29. Witty discusses what and who a comedian is and also the potential of humor to influence persons in a positive manner. Underscored is the need for researchers to take humor seriously and give it, and its potential to influence people, close study.

Zurier, S. (1988, February). For salesmen only: Humor can be your best sales tool. Industrial Distribution, 77, 51. Zurier presents humor as integral to the selling process: it facilitates successful or nonsuccessful relationships between salesman and customer, which, in turn, determines the sale.

Books

Gruner, C.R. (1978). Understanding laughter: The workings of wit and humor. Chicago: Nelson Hall. This book, educational and entertaining, provides a summary of research on humor as communication. As Gruner states, it may be viewed as a "small treasury of humor, a theoretical argument and a reference book."

Nahemow, L., McCluskey-Fawcett, K.A. and McGhee, P.E. (Eds.). (1986). Humor and aging. Orlando: Academic Press, Inc. Nahemow's book examines humor and its roles in an individual's lifespan; it gives special attention to humor about and by the elderly.